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ABSTRACT

This booklet is intended to aid leaders of local education associations in developing a continuing public relations (PR) program aimed at establishing and maintaining a favorable public image for teachers. Although it offers useful guidelines for developing a PR program, the booklet does not contain lists of specific things to do. Instead, it focuses primarily on the philosophy and activities that form the basis of a PR program appropriate for teacher associations. In a series of short sections, it discusses the need for a PR program and its potential benefits, formation of a PR committee, analysis of the group's PR needs, planning a PR program, communicating with the public, and evaluating the impact of a PR program. (JG)

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for education associations

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In one sentence, then, the design symbolizes the forward thrust of education through a united teaching profession. Registration of this symbol with the U.S. Patent Office as a "collective membership mark" has been completed.

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CONTENTS

	page
Public Relations for a Changing Profession	5
What Is Public Relations, Anyway?	6
Four Basic PR Steps	6
Needed: A Commitment	7
Teachers Must Know the PR Benefits	8
Wanted: An Active PR Committee	8
Put a Policy down on Paper	9
Determine the Priority Publics	12
Start by Looking and Listening (Step 1: analysis)	13
A Track to Run On (Step 2: planning)	16
Choosing the Effective Method (Step 3: communicating)	20
Person-to-Person	21
Mass Media	23
Community Participation	25
It Goes On and On (Step 4: evaluating)	26
A Final Word	26

A service of the public relations department of your state association and the NEA's Division of Press, Radio, and Television Relations and Division of Affiliates and Membership.

Foreword

"Change" has been the password in American public education in the last few years.

It is reflected in the school curriculum, in teaching methods and materials, in school policies and programs. More importantly, the roles and responsibilities of educators have changed to keep pace with these improvements.

Because of professional negotiations, education associations now have a share in educational decision-making in areas of curriculum, planning, class size, and many other aspects of the total school program. Teacher salaries have been rising, spurred by states with professional negotiation or collective bargaining laws. Professional negotiations have given teachers a greater voice in school affairs, and the added responsibilities that go with it.

"What ever happened to the meek, dedicated public servant that the teacher used to be?" some citizens ask.

The "image" of the teacher has been altered. But an image is simply a reflection of reality, as seen by the beholder. A lack of public understanding about negotiations, and the resultant value to the school district, has confused and even irritated citizens. Teachers have been looked upon as the "bad guys" in many instances as citizens relate higher taxes to the "demands" of teachers. Sharing in educational decision-making has been called "militancy" by critics.

And critics of teachers have increased, not because citizens no longer admire or respect teachers, but because of a lack of understanding of the changing responsibilities of teachers in the improvement of education.

Local education associations have taken on added importance. They are a vital force in directing the teacher's new strength into the most effective channels. Education associations, particularly at the local level, have become the vehicle for collective action. As such, local associations bear the responsibility of interpreting that role to teachers and citizens, and of creating greater understanding of the teaching profession and support for teachers.

Public relations (PR), in particular, has taken on a new look for local education associations. In past years, the association president appointed a PR chairman and too often that's about as far as PR got. Success or failure depended upon one person. Today, the PR chairman still remains a key appointment, but the local association's PR program demands a working committee in order to carry out an effective program.

This handbook, then, is about public relations (PR)—an art and a science which seeks to bring about a harmony of understanding between an organization and the publics it serves and upon whose goodwill it depends.

The "tips" contained in this booklet may be different from what you expect. It doesn't contain lists of specific things to do (these will come in later booklets), but discusses briefly the philosophy and activities which make up a public relations program for education associations. These are the essential first "tips" needed by associations.

Local education association leaders are urged to make this handbook the first step in development of a continuing public relations program aimed at interpreting the good work of teachers —and thus defining the "image" of a changing profession.

Public Relations for a Changing Profession

Today's teachers are well educated, competent professionals who appreciate the value of their services, desire adequate compensation and a voice in the formulation of policies that affect the students they teach and their profession. Criticism of methods, objectives and self-interests of teachers is hurting them and their profession. No one is going to defend and interpret the teaching profession unless teachers and other educators do it themselves.

Effective public relations by teachers and other educators smooths the way for better relationships between the teaching profession and the community it serves. Adequate communication and interpretation about teachers will help mold supportive community attitudes about the profession.

The professional association is the voice of teachers. Local and state education associations and the National Education Association can provide the united strength that the profession needs and the services that individual teachers, supervisors, and other educators need but cannot afford. Associations provide the know-how in bringing about change through legislative action, mass media concentration, professional guidance and constructive planning.

Development of a public relations program for teachers is one of the most important responsibilities of the local association. People are close to education only at the local level where important, personal contacts can be made. This is where public interest in schools is highest and where the best opportunity exists for two-way communication (listening and telling) between educators and citizens. Through the local association, individual

teachers are able to have a voice in and play a part in effective public relations for themselves and their profession. And the manpower to do an effective PR job is available through the organizational efforts of the local association.

What is Public Relations, Anyway?

"Public relations" for a local education association is a planned and systematic two-way process of communication between the association and its membership and external publics. PR's function is to influence opinion through the association's performance. As such, PR serves to stimulate a better understanding of the role, objectives, programs, and accomplishments of the association.

That public relations is essential is seldom debated today. Even so, the term is not always understood. Part of the misunderstanding is due to the fact that a wide variety of activities parades under its banner and part reflects the fact that public relations is still in the fluid state of defining itself. Unfortunately, to most people, "PR" is considered a synonym for publicity. But it is not simply press agentry, nor publicity, nor advertising, propaganda, or promotion. True, the process of public relations may, at times, utilize the techniques of any or all of the above. But PR is much more.

Public relations is a *leadership function* of the officers of the local association which:

1. *Evaluates the attitudes* of those audiences upon whose understanding and support the association depends;
2. *Identifies the programs and procedures* of the organization with those audience attitudes and interests, and then
3. *Executes a program of action* to earn the understanding and acceptance of those audiences.

Four Basic PR Steps

The process of public relations revolves, continuously, around four basic steps. Much like an iceberg, three-fourths of

the public relations process is below the surface and does not show. What does show is too often taken for the whole iceberg. The PR process involves (a) *analysis* of the priority audiences of the association and an understanding of their attitudes and degree of understanding and support; (b) *planning* a two-way communication program with these priority audiences, in order to deal effectively with what is important to the association, not just what is urgent; (c) *communicating* (the "part that shows"), which means both listening and telling, and finally, (d) *evaluating*, assessing the effectiveness of public relations activities.

Execution of these four basic steps in the public relations process is the responsibility of the top leadership of the association, with the cooperative assistance of its members. No PR program will be effective unless teachers appreciate the value of good public relations and are committed to doing things which will improve them. No PR program can create the belief that a local education association is an action-oriented organization if that association is not. Public relations reflects the program. Merely appointing a PR chairman and a committee is not enough. The chairman and the committee will not effectively function if the total membership is unaware of the benefits of public relations activities and does not insist that these benefits be realized.

Needed: A Commitment

A commitment to effective communication, both inside and outside the organization, and an awareness of the importance of planned public relations activities are vital priorities in the continuing program of the association. It is up to the elected leaders to take the initiative in *planning* and organizing the public relations program of the association. But it is the *members themselves* who will determine the effectiveness of that program.

When a teacher makes an impression (good or bad) upon someone, it builds an image (good or bad) of teachers, of the teaching profession, and of the association to which teachers belong. No amount of press releases will offset personal impressions made by teachers on other people.

Teachers Must Know the PR Benefits

The first step in development of a planned public relations program for an association is an analysis of the benefits to teachers from such a program.

"What's in it for me?" needs to be answered for members of the association in order to arouse enthusiasm for an all-out, sustained PR program.

Most teachers probably feel that PR is publicity, getting stories about the association in the newspaper or running a full-page ad. They need to realize the importance of their role in building good public relations and in formulating the PR objectives of the local association. The state association can assist local leaders in the important, initial task of involving members in an awareness of the importance of public relations activities. The benefits of a PR program for the association can be described in membership publications and in workshops, seminars, or conferences through presentations and perhaps even outside speakers.

Every member of the association must be given the opportunity to present his ideas on what should be accomplished for teachers and their association through public relations. Members gathered in a workshop for small-group discussion about the goals and program of the association can quickly collect many ideas. If this is not possible, questionnaires will give each member an opportunity to respond.

Once this has been done, the association leadership can begin the job of organizing methods required to attain the public relations goals set by the members.

Wanted: An Active PR Committee

The public relations committee should be a key committee of the local association. The committee should be composed of energetic people who are recognized by fellow teachers for their general intelligence, good judgment, and ability to get things

done. The job of the committee will be to lead the planning and coordination of the association's PR activities. The chairman of the PR committee should have direct access to and be closely involved in the activities and deliberations of the association officers. One of the prime duties of the PR committee—through the PR chairman—is to advise the local association's executive committee of the public relations implications of their decisions *before* they make the decisions. To do that, the committee must be kept informed of all association activities.

If members of the PR committee can write and express themselves well, fine. However, the ability to work with people is far more important. The job requires an active committee if an effective PR program is to be implemented.

Hard and final guidelines for the structure of a PR committee are impossible due to the difference in size, experience, and environment of local associations. From four to seven members will, in all probability, be necessary to work on the various activities which make up a total PR program. And, to be effective, associations might consider appointing some members of the PR committee for more than one year, or to staggering terms, to assure continuity of a public relations program. Individuals, or subcommittees, should be given specific parts of the total PR responsibility, but the entire committee should participate in major decisions.

The success of the PR program can only be as good as the creative ideas and energy of the individual members of the PR committee.

Put a Policy down on Paper

The basis for an organized public relations program is planning—based on a clear and concise *policy*. And that's the first important job of the PR committee. Developing a public relations policy starts with the realistic aims of the local association. It encompasses a determination of goals, of strategy, of objectives. Such a policy sets up both long-range and short-range objectives. An ounce of prevention is worth a ton of pamphlets, so careful attention to policy formation should establish the

groundwork for the purposes and functions of the PR committee.

In California, the sample association constitution and standing rules distributed by CTA State Professional Services state that:

> "The public relations committee shall work with administration and faculty in developing favorable community relations for and attitudes toward the teaching profession, local schools and public education; it shall promote and organize teacher participation in activities to improve community relations."

The Michigan Education Association suggests local association public relations committees direct their efforts toward:

1. The steps that need to be taken to improve understanding and to increase appreciation of the services rendered by educators.
2. The development of the concept in the public's mind for the support of education as a social instrument.
3. The process of keeping the public informed about their schools.
4. The process of keeping the membership aware of association activities.

10

If it's desired to spell out specific duties as well as general themes in the association's PR policy statement, the declaration by the Teachers Association of Long Beach, California, provides a sample:

I. Purpose

> To enhance the prestige of the teaching profession and to assist in maintaining a favorable climate between the community and the profession.

II. Recommendations

A. To continue the following action within TALB:

1. The support of Public Schools Week and American Education Week.

2. The informing of all members of TALB's program and services.

B. To continue the following community-connected activities:

1. Subscribe to a membership in the Chamber of Commerce for the president.
2. Invite members of the Board of Education to TALB's social activities.
3. Continue the awards dinner and the bestowing upon a local citizen an annual award for oustanding service to our youth.

C. To improve the image of the teacher in the community by:

1. Developing among teachers a feeling of greater responsibility for their role in the public relations program.
2. Encouraging teachers to display degrees, certificates and credentials in their classrooms and offices.
3. Encouraging teachers to become involved in community activities such as service clubs, churches, PTA, and to provide the TALB publications with information about these activities.
4. Publicizing teacher accomplishments in the community.
5. Placing TALB TALKS in such places as offices of doctors and dentists (or have teachers place copies there).
6. Encouraging an active public information program, including regular news releases to the news media and by participating in radio and television programs.
7. Developing a demand for and maintaining an active speakers bureau composed of competent teachers and professional staff members and friends of education who can speak with authority on educational problems in our community.
8. Assembling packets of information about our school system which can be distributed to newcomers in our district.
9. Holding a special event, such as Grandfather's Day, for the purpose of bringing oldsters into the school.

10. Preparing a round-up news feature about faculty plans for professional improvement each summer. (Example: college work, specialized travel, employment related to teaching duties, etc.)

Once the members of the association have provided the PR committee with their views on goals and objectives of a public relations program, the committee can then formulate a specific or general policy statement which serves as the framework for such a program, and supporting projects for such a program.

But there are some other important considerations that need to be tacked onto the preparation of such a policy statement.

Determine the Priority Publics

An important part of the analysis and planning stage in the public relations process is a careful look at the most important audiences of the organization. This is the necessary defining of publics.

A "public" is a group of people with common interests or characteristics. The publics, or special audiences, of a local education association are many—and they may change as local circumstances change. These important audiences include, for example, (a) the members of the association, (b) other district teachers who are not members, (c) school board members and top administrators, (d) parents of school-age children, (e) news media personnel, (f) community leaders, and (g) businessmen. The list can grow as local problems or concerns grow.

12

Teachers who serve as members of their association PR committee may be frightened away from their public relations task as soon as they compile the list of important publics. The list may appear too long, the task too great and seemingly complicated, for teachers to feel they have time or necessary skills in communicating with that many audiences.

"I'm just a teacher," complained one local association PR chairman, "I can't possibly communicate with all of those people all of the time!"

It's not necessary to "communicate with all of those people" all of the time.

What is necessary, at the outset, is to determine the *priority* of the publics for the association, at a certain time. Such a priority list should, of course, include the members as the most important public. School board members, top administrators, and newsmen are certain to be included in this categorization of key publics. It is impossible to listen and talk, effectively, with everyone all of the time. But it is important that priority goals be examined to learn *who* must be concentrated upon *first*, who next, and a reasonable, workable group of important publics selected.

This rating of importance also should include a determination of the *most effective channels of communication* with those target publics. Hard-working PR committees will soon realize that they rarely have time, talents, and money to do all of the things they think should be done. That's what one PR practitioner calls the "perpetual priority problem." The kind of action required in a local association's continuing PR program needs to be based on what will accomplish the short-term goals set by the PR committee, and move toward realization of long-range PR objectives.

Coupled with the rating of priority publics and a search for methods of communication to reach those groups are *two other important considerations:* what are the existing attitudes toward the association now held by those "publics" (and where did they get that idea?) and who are the group leaders or *influentials* in each of those priority publics?

Start by Looking and Listening (Step 1: analysis)

Here the vital analysis stage of the PR process requires the PR committee to look into the association's mirror. Shades of the poet Robert Burns:

Oh wad some power the giftie gie us
To see oursel's as ithers see us!

The PR chairman and his committee need to begin their work by listening, not talking. They need to assess, informally

and formally, the current attitudes of their audiences. What do the members think of the association? Why? How do they learn of the activities of their association? Whom do they seek when they have a question or concern? How can they be reached? These and similar questions need to be asked, not only of members, but of other members of other priority audiences—newsmen, top administrators, parent leaders, etc.

There are a number of ways PR committee members can obtain answers in this vital listening stage of their public relations program. *Informal methods* include: (1) personal contacts or telephone queries; (2) advisory groups, such as the faculty representatives of the association, a group of local newsmen, or the PTA Council; (3) membership enrollment records; (4) press clippings and radio and TV monitorings on what has been said or printed about the association; (5) buzz sessions held with groups of faculty members in different school buildings; and (6) informal listening in faculty lounges and at the lunch table.

More *formal* research is available through the use of a written questionnaire. Such a survey instrument could be developed by the PR committee, utilizing the skills of a sociology teacher who understands basic techniques in opinion polling. If a questionnaire is prepared for distribution to the members of the association, or a sampling from that membership, it should make clear why the information is desired and for what purpose. And the findings from the opinion poll should be summarized and reported back to the group that was polled.

Once a good look 'n' listen *inside* has been undertaken, the next step is to move outside—for community analysis. The California Teachers Association offers this advice in its *Public Relations Handbook:*

> What organizations exist in the community? What's the major interest and influence of each? Who are the leaders? In what activities do they take pride? How do their interests impinge on the concerns of teachers and schools? Which ones maintain "education committees?"

In this organizational analysis, you could observe the overlapping membership and leadership forming patterns of community power. You'd include political, military, patriotic, veteran, religious, service, labor, industrial and business, professional, avocational or recreational, fraternal, ethnic, and women's organizations.

What is the district voting pattern and history? Are there contrasting political interests among important segments of the people? Do voting records by precinct in school and general elections over recent years reflect a trend?

Is the population highly stable, slowly increasing or burgeoning? Is there an identifiable difference between the economic, political and educational interests of newcomers vs. old time residents? Are new leaders emerging, or old leaders being challenged? What cultural agencies exist, and who supports them?

If a local association is going to establish good relationships with the people and organizations in a community, the program of the association must be based on knowledge and understanding of that community. This is a "must" in a long-range PR program, one that is worth annual careful attention by perhaps a subcommittee of the PR committee or one member of the association with skill in the analysis process. In younger, suburban communities, regular assessment of community attitudes, political and social structure, and influential leaders is a necessity as these elements are constantly shifting and changing. (*Political Power and Educational Decision-Making*, by Ralph B. Kimbrough, Rand McNally & Co., Chicago, 1964, is a possible resource book for this purpose.)

15

Considerable care should be given to the search for influential leaders in the priority publics of a local association. The person who is president of the Chamber of Commerce may not necessarily be the influential leader of that group. In all probability, it is someone who served as president a few years ago. Barbers and beauticians may be more important in community communication than presidents of service clubs. Too often, association leaders make up a list of the chief officers of service clubs and parent organizations and feel they have collected

a list of the "influentials" in their community. It's not that easy. Every social group has its own opinion leaders and identifying them, let alone recognizing shifts in this leadership, is a laborious process.

(Booklet #10 in this *PR Bookshelf Series*, "Community Decision-Making," will be helpful to local association leaders interested in this aspect of the public relations process.)

So the beginning of a public relations program doesn't even show—the listening stage. Appointment of a PR chairman and his committee does not mean a mad dash into producing a flurry of news releases. It means, instead, assessment of members' attitudes and opinions of the goals and purposes of a planned public relations program, analysis of the priority audiences of the association, determination of the attitudes of those audiences, and development of a policy statement to serve as the basis for the public relations program. It means *listening*. Teachers can learn a great deal when they listen to what students say about them, when they listen to parents, to each other, and to their critics and admirers.

This is the toughest part of the PR process. But the "feedback" should shape the communication activities of the association, instead of vice versa. Frankly, most of the first-year work of a newly-organized PR committee should be devoted to a careful study of both the association (programs, projects, and problems) and the most important publics of that organization.

Then comes the next step—planning.

A Track to Run On (Step 2: planning)

If the PR chairman and his committee have tackled the first part of the iceberg, they now have a picture of the publics with which they seek to communicate. Their planning must take two directions—long-range, to accomplish the basic PR goals of their members, and short-range, to help solve the immediate problems of the association. A word of caution, though.

Immediate problems have a tendency to overshadow well-laid plans to accomplish long-range goals. "Fire fighting" is too often the trademark of the PR "program" of many active local associations. The PR committee is moving from crisis to crisis, like the legendary little Dutch boy putting his fingers in different holes of a leaky dike.

Communication in time of crisis or during a representative election often is a form of concentrated propaganda. This booklet is not intended to cover these special situations, but outlines the policies and activities for a year-around PR program.

Planning a PR program should start with a review of the on-going, major activities of the association. Committee members need to determine how they will interpret their organization and help accomplish such regular activities as (a) the membership campaign, (b) recognition of new teachers in the school district, (c) professional negotiation with the board of education, and (d) election of officers and appointment of committee chairmen. Other specific responsibilities which will often require help from other association members include: (1) editing a newsletter or newspaper for the membership, (2) operating a speakers' bureau, (3) serving as program chairman for the association, (4) editing a President's bulletin for faculty representatives, (5) developing and maintaining personal contacts with community organizations, (6) developing special communications with the membership and public, such as publications or "the telephone tree," and (7) writing news releases and maintaining contact with the news media.

Next, PR planners should examine all publications of the association to see if these carry out the long-range PR goals of the organization. Careful analysis of the content and appearance of local membership materials and the association's newsletter to members should be an annual step in the planning process. How do these printed materials measure up to the "image" that the association seeks to create with its members? Should any improvements be made in any of these materials, either in content or design (or both)?

More questions need to be asked about the other types of communication by the association with its priority publics. How often does the organization communicate, formally, with its members? Regularly, sporadically, or only in time of crisis? If the association still has general membership meetings, how well-planned are they, how effective are they? (in the eyes of those who attend), and how well attended are they? How effective are meetings of the faculty representatives? Could the PR committee work with faculty representatives to help give them ideas for improving membership communication? Answers to these and similar queries will help shape the planning of the basic work of the PR committee.

Then comes equal consideration of *new aspects in the program of the association* for the year, or in the light of special problems to be faced during the year by the school district. If the association is on the brink of plunging into board-staff negotiations for the first time this year, an entire new function lies ahead for the PR committee. If the school district faces the necessity of turning to the public in a school finance tax levy campaign, or a forthcoming re-organization of the school district boundaries, the association will need to plan its program and position on both public questions.

Special projects of the association may be under consideration in the forthcoming year by the executive committee of the local association. Included, then, in planning a public relations program may be such activities as function and activities of the association in American Education Week, in a curriculum study, in the organization of a staff-citizen committee, or in the development of a special teacher-sponsored scholarship fund or after-school tutoring program.

In every decision of the leadership of the association—in those decisions that require communication for the decision to be effectively carried out, the PR chairman and his committee must help local leadership answer these questions (*before* the decision is made):

1. Who should know this?

2. When should they know this?
3. How do we reach them to explain?
4. What do we say?

The PR chairman and committee are the "devil's advocates" to the other leaders of the association. They should automatically apply an "analysis formula" to every program, special event, or press release to determine if the goals of the association are to be served by that event or project. Each special project under consideration by the executive committee of the local association should be measured by a checklist of questions, such as the type used by the DuPont Company:

What is the objective this project is designed to gain?
Is the objective sound and desirable?
Are there collateral advantages?
Is the project feasible?
Can it be done with existing personnel?
Does it involve cooperation outside the association?
Is it counter to sound public relations policy?
Is it counter to association policy?
Is the expense too high in relation to possible gain?
What are the penalties of failure?
Why do it now?
Why do it this way?

Once these questions have been answered, once the project is approved in the planning stage, then the PR committee can go to work to determine how to interpret and publicize the project to the priority publics of the association.

In a nutshell, that's the gist of step #2 in the public relations process—planning. Like the first step, analysis of audiences and determination of attitudes, this second important part of the job is under the surface. It "doesn't show," either.

But, like the first analysis step, it is tremendously important in determining the effectiveness of the third step—communication, the part that shows.

So far, then, emphasis has been placed repeatedly on a certain factor required of the PR committee and especially the PR chairman—good judgment. The "magic" of PR is not mastery of communication techniques as much as it is the ability to work with others, to listen and to plan, and the skills required to "put yourself in the other fellow's shoes."

Choosing the Effective Method (Step 3: communicating)

Once upon a time, a group of local association public relations chairmen attended a PR conference to help them sharpen their skills in PR. The opening session frightened most of them right out of their voluntary chairmanships! In that initial conference session, they were instructed to attend a table seminar on "one or more" of the following topics: internal communication, school board relations, American Education Week, teaching as a career, radio and television techniques, working with the press, student relations, PR tips, photography, speakers' bureaus, and bulletin boards! The conferees had exactly one hour to move from table to table to "pick up some handy ideas."

Many of the PR chairmen, interviewed after the conference, disclosed the room full of techniques made them feel totally inadequate for the post they had agreed to accept in their association.

"I can't do most of those things," said one participant. "If I could, I'd be a full-time PR man instead of a classroom teacher."

"If I knew there was that much to it," complained another, "I wouldn't have accepted the job."

Unfortunately, when conference planners set out to polish skills they try to cover the waterfront in a single meeting. And, as a result, PR newcomers may be talked out of that which they came to learn.

Communicating with priority publics of a local association requires some priority setting, too. The PR chairman and his

committee must select those techniques they can effectively apply in order to meet the goals that they helped establish.

Subsequent booklets in this *PR Bookshelf Series* will focus on some of the *basic* communication *techniques* of local education associations—newsletters, publicity, and press, radio and TV tips. The purpose of this handbook, though, is to outline the steps involved in the PR process and to point out briefly the *basic areas* of communication—person-to-person, printed material, electronic media, and individual participation.

Within these general categories, PR chairman and committee must select the appropriate techniques to be utilized by the association, again dependent upon available finances, time, and talents.

Person-to-Person

A banking institution in developing a public relations program discovered in the analysis stage of that program that people felt the bank was "stiff and cold." Customers said that it was not a very friendly place in which to do business. So the bank poured thousands of dollars into newspaper, radio, and TV advertising, with good copy describing the friendly atmosphere and pleasant surroundings of the bank. A follow-up survey indicated very little change in customer attitudes.

Then a PR campaign was launched, this time with bank employees. Contests were held to see which teller could identify the most customers by name; handsome prizes went to the winners. Pictures of the winning "Employees of the Month" were posted on displays in the main bank lobby. And customer attitudes changed accordingly as revealed in another follow-up survey. Moral: Publicity and advertising are an effective part of a PR program, only if they reflect performance.

Suggests the California Teachers Association:

> "Think what would happen if the committee could mount an effective campaign to convince every staff member that his own best interests and those of his school would be served if he diligently endeavored to *"say a good word daily."* If

every teacher could succeed each day in passing along some favorable comment about a pupil's achievement, a fellow teacher's success, a counselor's fine influence on a child, an improvement in curriculum or methods, or any of a hundred other possible happy occurrences, the community would soon be flooded with positive ideas about teachers and schools."

Dr. Gary Watts, Director of Field Services for the NEA, underscored the importance of the communication effort of every member of a local association when he wrote: "Strong local associations must be service-oriented and must be geared to the mass-involvement of members. This calls for increasingly effective communications, especially person-to-person dialogue."

Teaching, by its nature, gives teachers a bushel of opportunities for positive or negative PR, and usually in a one-to-one relationship. The growing use of parent-teacher conferences as part of reporting the progress of students is a good example, as
22 are field trips and utilization of parents in the school program, as teacher aides or library assistants. Positive teacher public relations, and thus those of the profession and association, still begins, or ends, in the classroom.

Expansion of a personal PR program for a local association could lead into development of a speakers' bureau, composed of association members. Suggestions for implementing such a project can be obtained from your state association's PR department or from NEA's Division of Press, Radio, and Television Relations. NEA's Association of Classroom Teachers and Division of Field Services have a number of publications helpful to local associations that want to expand face-to-face communication.

It isn't a question of whether educators and the local association will have any PR or not. It's a question of what kind. For as long as there are people, working and talking with others, there will be PR. It often requires imaginative leadership and careful planning to involve association members in a successful campaign to turn negative impressions into positive ones.

Mass Media

It's difficult, sometimes physically impossible, to talk with everyone in the association at one time. So the basic, printed communication device of most local associations is the news bulletin or newsletter. A word, now, about the purpose and pitfalls in publishing an association newsletter.

The basic purpose of such a publication, very simply, is to *impart information.* The newsletter is an instrument for keeping the members informed on current activities of the local, state, and national education associations. But it does more than that. It should serve as a sounding board for teacher opinions, promote inservice education and successful classroom procedures, and be a record of the association's program and accomplishments.

And it has another, very important role—*it presents an image* of the association and as such, brings prestige to the organization and its members. If the newsletter impresses people and wins friends, it acts to encourage prospective members to join the local association.

There are a few "if's" in the publication picture. An association newsletter creates a good image *if* it's carefully done. It wins friends and impresses people *if* it is interesting, authoritative, and appears to have been produced with some care (it should be—after all, it's published by teachers!). *What it says,* and how that is said, is more important than the design and layout. But a sloppy, dittoed or mimeographed throw-away piece usually will not attract much interest to the content.

People tend to believe what they see in print. The association is judged by what it says in print, and the impression left by that printed publication. One basic rule for PR committees: don't print anything and send it to the members, or anyone else, if the content and appearance isn't interesting to you.

Every local association, large or small, urban or rural, should publish a news bulletin for its members. But there are far too many associations that might be better off to find another way to communicate with members than distribute the

poorly prepared, nearly illegible dittoed material now being circulated.

A newsletter editor should be selected with care. He should be a member of the PR committee and be given plenty of help. Other members can assist by serving as an editorial committee. One person should be given the task of keeping the mailing list current and making sure the newsletter is reaching all members and retirees regularly. If the association publication is carefully prepared, neat in layout and design, and interesting in content, it should be circulated to influential leaders in the community, to newsmen, legislators, and shared with other local education associations.

Responsibility for a publication is a challenging, new experience for an educator. The association editor will need advice, and there are several places where he can get it. Good sources for layout and design advice might be the editor of the community's local newspaper, and the headquarters staff personnel of the state association. Editors of nearby local education associations can also offer suggestions. Book #5, *Publishing a Newsletter*, in this NEA PR Bookshelf series, contains basic suggestions for improving both the content and design of local association publications. And every educational group in America that publishes a periodical is eligible for membership in the Educational Press Association of America. Membership entitles organizations to participate in national and regional conferences and workshops, to get helpful materials and suggestions. For information, contact: EDPRESS, Syracuse University School of Journalism, Syracuse, New York 13210. NEA's Division of Affiliates and Membership also has many "how-to-do-it" materials.

One final caution about a newsletter. It is only one means of communication. Too often association officers have expected a newsletter (or magazine) to serve as the entire communications and public relations program with its membership. It can't accomplish that. The newsletter, no matter how well done, is, as we have pointed out, only one method of communicating with the association's publics.

Writing for the news media is another story. Like internal publications, it requires some basic journalistic skills, but also an understanding of the needs, deadlines, and concerns of radio, newspaper, and TV newsmen. Tips for improving techniques in this vital phase of the association's PR program are provided in two publications in this PR Bookshelf series: Book #6, *A Primer in Publicity,* and Book #9, *Press, Radio, and TV Tips.* Both are available from your state association or the NEA Division of Press, Radio, and Television Relations.

Community Participation

Speaking, to one person or to groups, and writing, for members of the community, are two basic communication instruments for the local association. But there is one more, very important PR tool that should not be overlooked. There is a whole world of activities in the community just waiting for teacher and educator participation and leadership.

Teachers have a tendency to stay in their own little group and talk shop to each other. The association should develop a plan to encourage members to take an active part in the life of their community, in social, fraternal and service organizations and the charity drives, cultural functions, and civic affairs of the community.

Local associations can work to provide substitutes for classroom teachers who join a luncheon service club. Teachers can lend their personal and organizational skills to the annual United Fund or Community Chest campaign. The association can plan and carry out the collection of teacher contributions to these funds. Teachers can become an important voice in local government, serving as members of boards, planning commissions, study groups. Most units of local government would welcome, from a local association, a list of members interested in serving on such governmental groups. Most charity drives would be overjoyed to learn that the education association was eager to participate in the community campaign. Most Junior Chamber

of Commerce groups would be delighted to have the leadership skills of young men educators.

This type of personal involvement in the life of the community makes citizens really realize the true image of educators. When members of a local association become an active force in community life, they have a first-hand opportunity to show that educators are above the ordinary, that they are intelligent, interested citizens of the community. At the same time, they leave another impression—that of the capable, professional expert in a chosen field! Which they are. And that's an awfully good "image."

It Goes On and On (Step 4: evaluating)

Extensive feedback is essential to an effective communications program, emphasize Scott Cutlip, professor of journalism at the University of Wisconsin, and Allen Center, vice president for public relations at Motorola, Inc., in their book, *Effective Public Relations*.

The final step in the PR process is to seek, through research, answers to the questions: "How did we do? Would we have been better off if we had tried something else?" Again, as was covered earlier, formal evaluation can be obtained through the use of questionnaires and informal evaluation can be gotten through personal contacts and listening in faculty lounges, at lunch tables or social events.

Of course, evaluating goes on and on during the entire communications process. It helps change or modify the PR program to make it more effective.

Evaluation leads logically back to the first step. And evaluation will forcefully remind the PR chairman and committee that *dissemination does not equal communication.*

A Final Word

The local association must be convinced that great things can be accomplished for the organization, and for the profession,

through the efforts of the PR chairman and committee. Development of a continuing public relations program can be the most important task undertaken by a local association. If the PR task is not treated with this importance, most, if not all, other association functions will suffer.

PR is not publicity. It is an art and science which seeks to bring about a harmony of understanding between the association and the public it serves and upon whose goodwill it depends.

The PR chairman and committee, now more than ever before, occupy one of the most responsible leadership positions in the association. The task is to organize the interpreting of the work of educators, and thus improve the image of a changing profession.

It's hard work . . . and a challenge.

This is booklet #2 in a series of 10 booklets written for education associations by the public relations department of your state association and the National Education Association's Division of Press, Radio, and Television Relations and Affiliates and Membership Division.

Additional copies of this booklet, "Tips for the PR Chairman," can be obtained at $1 each from Publications Sales, National Education Association, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Quantity discounts: 10-99 copies, 20 per cent; 100 or more copies, 50 per cent discount. Orders for $2 or less must be accompanied by payment.

28

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